

Chapter 6 – Conservation Actions – Species

Birds of Greatest Conservation Need



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Bobolink

Dolichonyx oryzivorus



STATUS: Populations in the eastern U.S. have declined since the early 1900s. North American Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a significant population decline in North America in recent decades. Status within the District of Columbia is undetermined.

RANGE: Breeds in the northern United States and southern Canada and winter in southern South America from Peru to Argentina. It is a passage migrant through the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Rock Creek National Park, and Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Bobolinks use tall grass fields, pastures, and grain fields for breeding. In some areas, they favor hayfields in close association with dairy farms. In spring and summer, their diets consists largely of insects, especially caterpillars, grasshoppers, and beetles, but in fall it also includes large quantities of weed seeds, wild rice, and bristlegrass. Nests are usually placed in a scrape, either natural or created by the female. Clutch size varies from 4 to 7 eggs.

THREATS: Primary threats are due to loss of suitable habitat. Changing agricultural practices and the loss of farmland to development are key factors contributing to species decline.

CONSERVATION ACTION: : Need to identify and conserve grasslands. Studies to determine precise status and habitat use within the District.

SITE MAP: 4

REFERENCES: 1-4

Species of Greatest Conservation Need



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Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*

STATUS: BBS data from 1966 through 1989 show stable populations in the Eastern region and in neighboring Maryland.

RANGE: Breeds from southern Minnesota east through southern New England, south to Gulf Coast and central Florida. Winters in Caribbean slope of Nicaragua, both slopes of Costa Rica and Panama, and in northern and western Colombia, northern Venezuela, and western Ecuador. Passage migrant through the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Most often found in deciduous forests near streams, in bottomland hardwoods, and cypress swamps. Key habitat requirements are tall closed canopies and relatively open understories. Primarily breeds in moist, upland deciduous forests with a moderate understory, generally near a stream. Tends to be scarce or absent in small forest tracts, unless the tract is near a larger forested area.

THREATS: The major threat is loss of suitable habitat as natural forests become fragmented, favorable conditions become less common, and cowbird parasitism increases. Largely absent from most heavily suburbanized and urbanized areas, and present in low densities in agricultural zones.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Forest management practices that produce large mature forests with tall closed canopies and high tree density will be favorable for Acadian Flycatchers. Apparently, will tolerate light selection cutting, although any cutting that opens up the canopy would be detrimental. Preservation of the Acadian Flycatcher in the District requires the protection of extensive moist and riparian woodlands with brushy understories. Enhanced monitoring is required within the District.

SITE MAP: 1, 2,5

REFERENCES: 1-4



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American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

STATUS: Widespread distribution but populations are declining. Critically imperiled in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from southeastern Alaska, Manitoba, and Newfoundland south to California, New Mexico, Arkansas, and Carolinas. Winters north to coastal British Columbia, Illinois, and along Atlantic coast to southern New England. Local migrant (resident?) within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Run Parkway, and Oxon Cove Park.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Breeds and overwinters in freshwater wetlands with emergent vegetation and shallow water. Seems adaptable to a wide range of wetland habitats ranging from margins of boreal lakes, through riverine marshes, to dense cattail marshes, and can thrive in wetlands of many types as long as suitable prey and adequate cover are available. Diet consists of strictly animal prey, mainly frogs, fish, crayfish, and small mammals. American Bitterns construct a platform nest from mainly dead reeds, sticks, cattails, and tall grasses either on dry ground or above water in tall vegetation. Clutch size averages 4 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: Threatened by loss and degradation of wetlands due to drainage, filling, conversion to agriculture or recreational use, siltation, and pollution.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Readily uses artificial wetlands created by impoundments at waterfowl refuges, a trait that could facilitate restoration of populations in regions where natural, inland freshwater wetlands have been destroyed or were scarce originally. Small wetlands (less than five ha) may serve as important alternate feeding sites and as "stepping stones" during movements between larger wetlands. Further studies are needed to determine population trends for this secretive species within the District.

SITE MAP: 3, 7

REFERENCES: 1 - 4



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American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

STATUS: An abundant species that has been declining steadily. Eastern region data show stable populations from 1966 through 1989. Status within the District of Columbia is undetermined.

RANGE: Breeds in eastern and central North America, from Manitoba and Labrador to Texas and Florida. Winters from southern Minnesota and Nova Scotia south to southern Texas and central Florida. Local migrant (resident?) within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits shallow margins of lakes, streams, bays mud flats, and open waters. Utilizes a wide variety of wetland habitats in both freshwater and marine situations, in and around marshes, swamps, ponds, lakes, bays, estuaries, and tidal flats. Eats mainly plant material (mainly seeds of various aquatic plants) and small aquatic animals (insects, amphibians, etc.) in freshwater habitats, and mostly mollusks and crustaceans in maritime habitat. Nests in tidal marshes, estuaries, as well as totally freshwater habitats. Clutch size varies from 9 to 12 eggs.

THREATS: Recent declines in past decades have been linked to habitat loss and an increase in Mallard numbers. Hybridization between the American Black Ducks and Mallards is a major concern. This species is particularly sensitive to human disturbance when nesting.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Maintaining large (30-50 ha) marshes containing dense emergent vegetation near a complex of diverse wetland types is the preferred management practice for this species. Further species-focused research is needed in the District.

SITE MAP: 1, 3, 5, 7, 11

REFERENCES: 1 - 4



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American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*

STATUS: Non-significant annual declines have been recorded for this species. State and regional results show sharp, but non-statistically significant declines for the period 1980-1999. Status within the District of Columbia is undetermined.

RANGE: Breeds primarily in the northeastern Midwest and adjacent Canada and the Northeast. Winters in the southeastern US, with some birds remaining on the lower Eastern shore during mild winters. Resident, local migrant, and breeder within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: The non-breeding habitat of this species is similar to its breeding habitat but typically includes more man-made habitats (e.g. sewage farms, rice fields), upper reaches of estuaries, and occasionally coastal meadows and is not limited to early-successional habitats. Unlike on the breeding grounds, mature pine-hardwood and bottomland hardwoods are often preferred. Wintering birds generally occupy moist thickets in daytime, and sometimes shift to more open habitats such as pastures, fields (including agricultural), and young clearcuts at night.

THREATS: The most serious threat is habitat loss and alteration, through urbanization, reforestation, drainage of wetlands, and agricultural development. The primary cause has been urbanization, which has severe impacts along the east coast. Environmental pollutants such as acid deposition, and pesticides pose additional threats. Long-term declines in populations of this species are apparent from a range of individual monitoring efforts.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Woodcocks use a wider variety of habitats during the non-breeding season. Wintering individuals may benefit most from a wide variety of habitats and age classes. This diversity of habitat types may be especially important to survival when severe weather forces woodcock from preferred sites.

SITE MAP: 2, 5, 6

REFERENCES: 1-4



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Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

STATUS: Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1966 through 1989 show a highly significant average annual increase of 2.8% in Eastern region populations; Maryland shows a similar increase of 3.0%. Critically imperiled in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from Alaska east to Newfoundland and south locally to California, Great Lakes, and Virginia; also in Arizona, along Gulf Coast, and in Florida. Formerly more widespread. Winters along coasts and large rivers in much of the United States. Migrant and breeder within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Breeding habitat most commonly includes areas close to (within 4km) coastal areas, bays, rivers, lakes, or other bodies of water that reflect the general availability of primary food sources including fish, waterfowl, and seabirds. Preferentially roosts in conifers or other sheltered sites in winter in some areas; typically selects the larger, more accessible trees. Feeds opportunistically on fishes, injured waterfowl and seabirds, various mammals, and carrion. Usually nests in the uppermost crotch of a tall coniferous or deciduous tree, or on cliffs near water. Loblolly Pine is the most commonly used tree species in Maryland. The nest is typically made of large sticks and branches, and is usually 5-6 ft. in diameter. Clutch size varies from 1 to 3 eggs.

THREATS: Major threats include habitat loss, disturbance by humans, biocide contamination, decreasing food supply, and illegal shooting. Loss of limited breeding habitat to urban development, and disturbance to breeding pairs are the two significant management issues within the District.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Protection of existing nest sites and maintaining suitable habitat throughout tidal waterways are critical to the continued existence of the Bald Eagle within the District of Columbia.

SITE MAP: 1, 2, 9

REFERENCES: 1 - 3



District of Columbia

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Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

STATUS: Stable or increasing in most areas of North America, but has declined in some areas. Vulnerable within the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds throughout the US (except Rocky Mountain region), from Washington, Saskatchewan, Minnesota, and New Brunswick to southern South America. Winters in the southern half of the United States. Local migrant (resident?) and breeder within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Cove Park, and the National Zoo.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits marshes, swamps, wooded streams, mangroves, shores of lakes, ponds, lagoons; salt water, brackish, and freshwater situations. Roosts by day in mangroves or swampy woodland. Diet consists mainly of fish, and lesser quantities of aquatic invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals. Eggs are laid in a platform nest in groves of trees near coastal marshes or on marine islands, swamps, marsh vegetation, clumps of grass on dry ground, orchards, and in many other situations. Clutch size varies from 3 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: Main threats are disturbance, degradation, and/or destruction of nesting and foraging sites. Breeding individuals are particularly sensitive to disturbance just before and during egg laying.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Known colony sites and foraging areas should be protected from disturbance and habitat destruction. Potential colony sites can be created on dredge spoil islands.

SITE MAP: 1, 3, 5, 7, 13

REFERENCES: 1 - 4



District of Columbia

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Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*



STATUS: May be decreasing in the northeastern United States. Critically imperiled in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from Alberta east to Manitoba and Nova Scotia, south to the Gulf Coast and Florida. Winters from southern Florida southward into tropics. Passage migrant and breeder in the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Breeds in broadleaf and mixed forest, preferring denser situations, less frequently in open woodland. Generally perches under or in tree canopy, forages at openings, edges, and wet areas. Opportunistically consumes various small vertebrates (small mammals, birds, snakes, frogs, etc.) and large invertebrates. Typically hunts from perch on stub or dead limb of tree, typically at clearing, along woodland road, forest edge, or at margin of seasonal and permanent waters. Regularly nests near wet areas and forest openings, edges, and woodland roads. Typically nests in crotch of moderate- to large-sized tree or on branch next to trunk, about 7-12 m above ground. Clutch size varies from 2 to 3 eggs.

THREATS: Habitat loss and fragmentation.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Understanding this species' sensitivity to forest fragmentation and various silvicultural practices will be important in maintaining healthy populations of Broad-winged Hawks. Because the Broad-winged Hawk is not sensitive about the type of forest habitat used for nesting, any efforts to conserve forest lands, particularly large contiguous tracts, will help conserve populations of this raptor in the District.

SITE MAP: 2

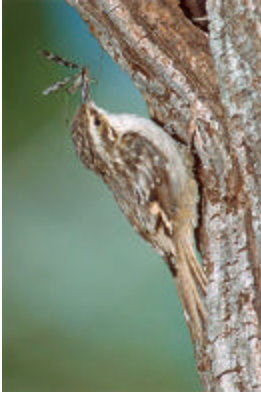
REFERENCES: 1 - 5



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Brown Creeper *Certhia Americana*



STATUS: Widespread, reasonably common, and demonstrably secure in many areas of North America. Status in the District of Columbia is undetermined.

RANGE: Breeds from Alaska east through Ontario to Newfoundland, and southward throughout western mountains, Great Lakes region, North Carolina, and New England. Winters in breeding range and south to Gulf Coast and Florida. Resident, local migrant, and breeder within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: The preferred habitat of this species includes forest, woodlands, forested floodplains and swamps. Scrub and parks are also used in winter and during migration. Most often found in coniferous and mixed forests. In the eastern U.S. south of the northern conifer zone, populations occur regularly in forested floodplains, and sometimes swamps. A component of dead trees is essential for nesting, so brown creepers tend to be associated with older forests. Brown Creepers feed on arthropods gleaned off the surface and in the crevices of tree bark. They feed primarily on the main trunk of trees, moving from bottom to top. They also consume some nuts and seeds. This species' critical habitat requirement for nesting is dead trees with loosely attached bark, under which it can conceal its nest. Clutch size varies from 4 to 7 eggs.

THREATS: Locally threatened by loss of forested wetlands and floodplain forest, forest fragmentation, and forest management practices that eliminate the dead tree component. Species is apparently area-sensitive, requiring large blocks of habitat.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Forests with a mix of tree species should be maintained where Brown Creeper populations reside. There is a need to protect or manage stands to have at least some trees or groves of trees over 100 years old, and to have dead trees with flaking bark for nest sites. Few bird species are as dependent on dead trees as Brown Creepers. Large dead trees in forested habitat should be allowed to stand at least until most of the bark is gone. More studies on population dynamics are needed for this species in the District.

SITE MAP: 2

REFERENCES: 1 – 5



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Species of Greatest Conservation Need



Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

STATUS: Maryland BBS data from 1966 through 1989 show a highly significant average annual decline. Vulnerable in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from southeastern Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and northern New England south to Gulf Coast and Florida. Winters in southern part of breeding range. Resident, local migrant, and breeder in the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Capitol Hill Parks, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Cove Park, and Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits thickets and bushy areas in deciduous forest clearings and forest edge, shrubby areas and gardens; in migration and winter also in scrub. Feeds on insects and other invertebrates and small fruits, as well as some small amphibians and reptiles; forages on or near ground. Nests on ground under small bush or as high as about 4 m in tree, shrub, vine.

THREATS: Habitat loss, through the removal of hedgerows, may contribute to the decline. An additional potential threat may be decline in insects during the spring and summer months. Since Brown Thrashers feed primarily in suburban and agricultural habitats, such behavior may make them more vulnerable to the use of pesticides.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Habitat management efforts aimed at preserving open fields, hedgerows, and brushy areas, as well as regulations on the use of pesticides in urban areas would go a long way in maintaining healthy populations of this ubiquitous species. Continued monitoring of the population is needed within the District.

SITE MAP: 2, 6, 8

REFERENCES: 1 - 4



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Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulean*

STATUS: Populations have shown significant declines across the range in the eastern United States, although the range has expanded, particularly in the northeast, perhaps in response to large-scale forest

maturation. Status undetermined within the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from southeastern Minnesota, southern Ontario, and western New England south to Texas, Louisiana, and northern Gulf Coast states. Winters primarily on the eastern slopes of the northern Andes. Passage migrant and breeder within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Oxon Run Parkway, Glover- Archbold Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits mature deciduous forests on both the breeding grounds in North America. Breeding areas in the Northeast are often in floodplains or other mesic conditions and are typified by large, mature trees and closed or semi-open forest canopies. Feeds primarily on bees, wasps, beetles, and caterpillars. The compact nest is built by the female on the lateral limbs of a tree and placed at a considerable distance from the bole of the tree, usually saddled on a large, lateral branch, attached perhaps to a small protruding twig. Clutch size ranges from 3 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: Habitat loss and fragmentation are the primary threats. Breeding populations in small forest tracts throughout the range are declining rapidly to extirpation. Patches of habitat below a certain size are simply not capable of supporting breeding birds.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Given the Cerulean Warbler's dependency on large tracts of appropriate forested habitat, preservation of such patches is critical. Forest management activities that are sensitive to the fragmentation of existing tracts would go a long way in the conservation of this species. Baseline studies on the population ecology of this species is needed within the District.

SITE MAP: 2, 5

REFERENCES: 1 - 4



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Species of Greatest Conservation Need



Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*

STATUS: Significant downward trend in the United States and Canada from 1966-1996 as indicated by analysis of BBS routes. Secure within the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from southeastern Saskatchewan east to southern Quebec and Nova Scotia, and south to Gulf states. Winters in the South America. Passage migrant and breeder in the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Present in all major parks and urban centers of the District.

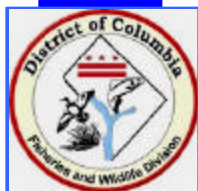
SPECIES ECOLOGY: Cosmopolitan; inhabits rural and urban environments having both an abundance of flying arthropods and suitable roosting/nesting sites. Nests principally in chimneys, but also on the interior walls of a variety of other anthropogenic structures including silos, barns, outhouses, uninhabited houses, boathouses, wells, and cisterns. Natural nest sites include the interior of hollow tree trunks and branches, Pileated Woodpecker cavities and rock shelters. Nest is a half-saucer shaped structure comprising straight twigs glued together with a saliva-like secretion and fastened to a vertical wall, usually in a dark, protected area of a building. Clutch size ranges from 3 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: The construction of homes without fireplaces and the screening, and demolition of buildings historically used for nesting/roosting can eliminate important habitat. The surface of metal flue pipe emplaced within newly-constructed chimneys is too smooth for swifts to cling to, resulting in the entrapment and death of birds. Potential for impact on prey availability through the use insecticides and pesticides

CONSERVATION ACTION: Management practices for Chimney Swifts include retaining chimneys as habitat and the construction of artificial nesting/roosting structures. Dark, vertical shafts having rough interior surfaces that facilitate roosting (e.g., chimneys, hollow trees) are essential for nesting and roosting. Chimneys with smooth surfaces (e.g., metal flue pipe) should be capped to prevent swift entrapment. Chimneys should be kept free of creosote as creosote build-up increases the likelihood of nest detachment from the chimney wall. This species readily adapts to anthropogenic structures for nesting and roosting; therefore likely to establish in new or historic localities with the construction of buildings that provide sunlight-excluding, vertical, rough-surfaced shafts. Determining trends in the use of chimney screening and the construction of new homes having chimneys with rough interior surfaces would be useful in assessing breeding habitat availability.

SITE MAP: 2, 5, 8

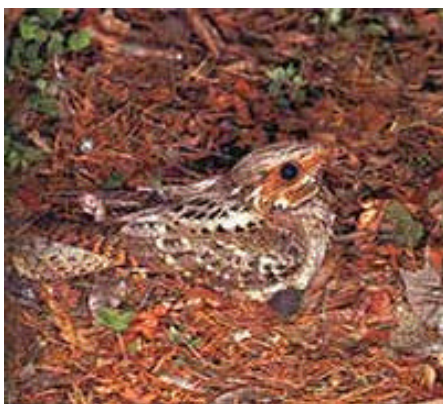
REFERENCES: 1 – 4



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Species of Greatest Conservation Need



Chuck-wills-widow
Caprimulgus carolinensis

www.ronausting.com/birds/chuckwillswidow.html

STATUS:

RANGE:

LOCAL HABITAT:

SPECIES ECOLOGY:

THREATS:

CONSERVATION ACTION:

SITE MAP:

REFERENCES:

Eliminated from Species of Greatest Conservation Need



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*



STATUS: Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1966 to 1992 show a non-significant increase throughout the United States. Status within the District of Columbia is undetermined.

RANGE: Breeds from Northern Alaska and Canada south to California, southwestern states, and New Jersey. Winters across much of the United States north to British Columbia and Virginia. Passage migrant through the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, and Oxon Cove Park.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits wet, grassy, or marshy areas, from tundra to temperate lowlands and hilly regions. In winter and during migration, also found in wet meadows, flooded fields, bogs, swamps, moorlands, and marshy banks of rivers and lakes. Feeds on insects, particularly fly and beetle larvae, are the Common Snipe's most important food items, but it also eats earthworms, small crustaceans, snails and small quantities of plant material. The nest consists of a depression in the ground under concealing vegetation. Clutch size averages 4 eggs.

THREATS: Loss, degradation, and modification of emergent wetlands through development, alteration of hydrology, and invasive species infestation. Snipe avoid marshes with tall, dense vegetation, such as that found in cattail and *Phragmites* monocultures.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Restore and protect emergent wetlands with a focus on the control of cattails and the eradication of *Phragmites*.

SITE MAP: 3, 4, 7, 9

REFERENCES: 1 - 2



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Species of Greatest Conservation Need



Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

STATUS: Populations of this species currently express some of the most consistent declines of any grassland bird in the United States. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicate a significant decline (averaging 2.53% per year) in North America, as well as the Eastern Region. Critically imperiled within the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from southeastern Canada south throughout eastern United States, west to Nebraska, Texas, and Arizona. Winters in most of breeding range. Resident, local migrant, and breeder in the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, and Oxon Cove Park.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits grasslands, savanna, open fields, pastures, cultivated lands, sometimes marshes. Tends to avoid recently burned grassland habitats. Eats mainly insects and other small invertebrates, also grain and seeds; forages on the ground. Nests on the ground in concealing herbage. The nest is a partly or completely domed cup nest composed of grasses, and, occasionally, of weed stems. Clutch sizes vary from 1-6 eggs.

THREATS: Primary threat is loss of appropriate habitat as farms and fields give way to development, revert to forests, or shift from pastures to row crops. Intensive management of hayfields and earlier and more frequent mowing affect nesting success. Also, the continued use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides disrupts habitat and food supply.

CONSERVATION ACTION: The future of the species depends on the continued presence of field, pasture, and meadow habitat, which are declining as habitat is lost and agricultural practices change. The species needs a minimum grassland size of 15-20 acres, with adjusted mowing schedules, and the implementation of more biological and integrated pest management.

SITE MAP: 4

REFERENCES: 1 - 4



District of Columbia

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Species of Greatest Conservation Need



Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

STATUS: Significant population declines have occurred in the last 30 years, particularly in the northeastern portion of the range. Apparently secure in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from British Columbia east to Maine, and south to California, southwest, Louisiana, Florida, and Guatemala. Winters south from southern British Columbia, Nebraska, and southern New England. Resident breeder in the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: : Inhabits forest and swamp edges, regenerating clearcuts, open-canopied forests (particularly those with a well-developed understory), reclaimed strip mines, mid-late successional fields, riparian thickets, overgrown fencerows, shrub/small-tree thickets, and other brushy habitats. Typically forages on the ground in dense, low vegetative cover. Scratches among loose ground debris (e.g., leaf litter) to uncover seeds and invertebrates. Omnivorous; consumes a wide variety of seeds, fruits, invertebrates, and small vertebrates. Nest is typically constructed on the ground, concealed among dense, woody vegetation. Clutch size varies from 2 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: Population densities are lower in urbanized areas relative to forested areas due to reduction in suitable successional habitat. Maturation of successional habitats also results in lower population densities.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Since the species prefers open-canopied, shrubby areas, management practices should promote early- to mid-seral successional habitats. Monitoring should continue until populations stabilize or appropriate management practices are developed and implemented.

SITE MAP: 2, 6

REFERENCES: 1 – 4



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet

Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla*



STATUS: North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicate annual survey-wide decrease in the period 1966-1996, and a highly significant average annual decline of 3.6% in the Eastern region. Imperiled in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from North Dakota east to central New England, and south to Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, central Texas, and western Colorado. Winters south to Gulf of Mexico and northeastern Mexico. Resident (breeder?) and local migrant within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, Capitol Hill Parks, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits old fields, brushy hillsides, overgrown pastures, thorn scrub, deciduous forest edge, sparse second growth, fencerows. Optimal habitat was described as areas greater than 2 hectares containing dense, moderately tall grass, low to moderate shrub density with 50-75% of shrubs less than 1.5 meters tall, and shrub cover between 15-35 percent. Eats insects, also spiders and seeds; forages mainly on the ground. Early nests are on or near ground in weed clumps or grass tufts, while later nests may be higher in small thick shrubs. The nest is a cup-shaped structure, constructed of dry grasses, weeds, rootlets, and hairs. Clutch size ranges from 1 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: Current intensive agricultural practices and spreading urbanization continue to restrict, or eliminate nesting habitat of old weedy fields with shrubs or small trees.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Keys to management include providing shrub-dominated edge habitat adjacent to grassland or providing grassland with a shrub component (both of must which include dense grass and moderately high litter cover), and avoiding disturbances that completely eliminate woody vegetation.

SITE MAP: 4, 6

REFERENCES: 1 – 4



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Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*

STATUS: BBS data from 1966 through 1989 indicate a highly significant average

annual population decline in the Eastern Region. Status is undetermined within the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from British Columbia, Manitoba, and New Hampshire south to Florida, West Indies, and Mexico. Winters north to California, Texas, and North Carolina, and south through Central America to north Costa Rica, and in the Bahamas and Cuba. Passage migrant (breeder?) through the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Kenilworth Park and Oxon Cove Park.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Breeding Grasshopper Sparrows prefer grasslands of intermediate height that are often associated with clumped vegetation interspersed with patches of bare ground. Other habitat requirements include moderately deep litter and sparse coverage of woody vegetation. Feed on insects (especially grasshoppers), other small invertebrates, grain (especially of bristlegrass and panic grass), and seeds. Picks up food items from the ground surface. The nest is a shallow cup-shaped structure made of dried grasses lined with finer grasses, rootlets, or hair. Clutch size varies from 3 to 5 eggs.

THREATS: Populations declines have resulted in part from loss of habitat, especially the conversion of grassland to row-crop agriculture, urban sprawl, and reforestation, compounded by losses incurred as a result of mowing of habitat and subsequent increased predation.

CONSERVATION ACTION: The key to continued Grasshopper presence is management of grasslands to maintain woody vegetation at less than 3 ft. Suitable old fields and grasslands should not be cut until after the peak of the breeding season.

SITE MAP: 4

REFERENCES: 1 – 4



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Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*

STATUS: Breeding Bird Survey data (1966-1989) show a stable population in the eastern region. Imperiled in the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Resident from Alaska and northern Canada eastward and southward throughout the Americas. Resident and breeder within the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Rock Creek National Park, Kenilworth Park, Oxon Cove Park, and the Fort Circle Parks area.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits various forested habitats, moist or arid, deciduous or evergreen lowland forest to open temperate woodland, including second-growth forest, swamps, orchards, riverine forest, brushy hillsides, and desert. Opportunistic feeder; eats mainly mammals (commonly mouse to rabbit size) and small to large birds (including hawks and waterfowl). Nest sites in different areas include abandoned or usurped nests of other birds (e.g., hawk, crow) or squirrel, natural tree cavities, stumps, rocky ledges, caves, in barns, and on artificial platforms. Clutch size ranges from 1 to 2 eggs.

THREATS: Progressive habitat loss as woodlands are converted to agriculture and development.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Preservation of extensive woodlands and public education is important for the management of this species in the District. Further studies are needed.

SITE MAP: 2, 5

REFERENCES: 1 – 4



District of Columbia

Bird Fact Sheet



Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

STATUS: Although Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1966 through 1999 show stable populations in the eastern region, the species has been found to be declining in North America. Status is undetermined within the District of Columbia.

RANGE: Breeds from southern Alaska south to Oregon and Oklahoma, and from Manitoba to Nova Scotia south to Arkansas and northern Alabama. Winters near coast from British Columbia south to California and from New England south to Florida and Texas. Passage migrant through the District of Columbia.

LOCAL HABITAT: Kenilworth Park, Anacostia Park, and Oxon Cove Park.

SPECIES ECOLOGY: Inhabits swamps, rice, swamps, marshes, and estuaries; winters mostly in freshwater but also regularly in estuaries and sheltered bays. Small fish are the predominant food of this species. It also eats black-fingered mud crabs, crayfish, dragonfly nymphs, and catfish. The breeding habitat of Hooded Mergansers consists of wooded swamps, streams, ponds, and lakes. They prefer a natural tree cavity, but also use hollow log stumps in banks, hollow tops of stumps, and Wood Duck boxes. Clutch size varies from 4 to 12 eggs.

THREATS: Loss of wetlands is currently believed to be the main threat to the future of this widespread species. It is vulnerable to forestry practices that limit or eliminate potential nesting sites.

CONSERVATION ACTION: Perhaps the increase in Wood Duck boxes will benefit this species. Certainly the Hooded Merganser's status should be monitored within the District, and wetlands utilized by this species during migration should be protected.

SITE MAP:

REFERENCES: 1 – 4

Species of Greatest Conservation Need